



HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATE

CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH R. PITTS



AUGUST, 2000

INDONESIA AND PAKISTAN

REP. PITTS RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT KILLINGS IN SPICE ISLANDS, ABUSES IN PAKISTAN

Recently, I returned from a visit to Indonesia and Pakistan during which my delegation met with the heads of state, President Wahid and General Musharraf, in both countries to discuss issues relating to democracy, human rights, the economy and defense.

In Indonesia, we visited two men hospitalized as a result of the violence against Christians – one man was a pastor who had been shot in the neck as his church was attacked. We also held meetings with a number of non-governmental organizations, some of which focus on the problems facing the ethnic Chinese and some of which focus



A woman injured by a nail bomb placed in an Indonesian church is cared for by a friend while hospitalized. (photo by Lucian Niemeyer)

on bringing food aid and dissolving the tension in the Spice Islands between Muslims and Christians. In addition, we discussed economic issues with the Minister of Trade and with business leaders who are interested in coordinating with small companies in Pennsylvania's 16th District. During our visit, there was a riot in one area of Jakarta as people took to the streets to catch criminals that the police have not pursued. Two days before we arrived, someone planted a nail bomb inside a church – the bomb was timed to explode during a women's meeting. Some members of our delegation visited the

hospital to meet with victims of that explosion.

There are tremendous needs in this nation with the world's fourth largest population. The continued unrest and violence seems to be a result of the "old guard" Suharto regime, working with the extremist Islamic groups, including the current leader of the People's Consultative Assembly Dr. Amien Rais, trying to destabilize and

undermine the leadership and presidency of President Abdurrahman Wahid, a moderate Muslim. President Wahid is working one step at a time to bring change to a government structure that has been rife with corruption and cronyism.

There are good opportunities for investment in Indonesia, particularly in the area of eco-tourism. And, there are a number of Christian and moderate Islamic groups working to bring peace in the Maluku. Business leaders, political leaders, and the non-governmental

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WESTERN SAHARA REPORT

INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM CONTINUES TO BE DELAYED, BAKER PLAN ENDANGERED

Unfortunately, the referendum on whether Western Sahara will be an independent country or a part of Morocco continues to be delayed for the Sahrawi people. After spending approximately \$500 million on peacekeeping efforts and \$30 million on humanitarian aid over a ten year period, the United Nations finally established a public list of eligible voters on January 17, 2000. The identification process was difficult due to the fact that

the Moroccan government moved Moroccans into the territory and circulated inter-governmental memorandums regarding coaching the Moroccans on how best to claim that they were Sahrawis and were eligible to vote.

There is great concern about reports in the United Nations that the U.S. Administration and the French government are pushing the Sahrawis and Moroccans to abandon the negotiated, signed

settlement plans under the pretext that there allegedly is no mechanism to enforce the result of the referendum. The May 30, 2000 meeting of the United Nations Security Council revealed that these two governments are willing to completely disregard the negotiated Settlement Plan and the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination. It is shameful that our Administration is willing to disregard the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination when the American Revolution was based upon that very right. The Clinton Administration and many in the U.S. Congress supported the right of the people of East Timor to determine their future. The people of Western Sahara deserve no less.

If you would like to take action on this issue, please write to President Clinton politely expressing your desire that the United States support the Settlement Plan negotiated by former Secretary of State James Baker and the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and push to hold a referendum immediately.

*The Honorable William J. Clinton
The President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500*

Western Sahara's Ambassador Moulud Said and President Mohammed Abdelaziz, Congressman Pitts, PECO Energy's Dave Woods and Greg Cary, and Christian Relief Services' Paul Krizek announce the shipment of a medical van to Western Sahara at a Capitol Hill press conference. PECO donated the van, and Christian Relief Services is paying to equip and ship it.



organizations all reported that international involvement (in the form of trade and international human rights monitors for the various areas of tension) was vital to keeping stability in their nation.

Protestant and Catholic Church leaders from the Spice Islands in eastern Indonesia appealed to the worldwide Christian community to observe an International Day of Prayer and Fasting for the Spice Islands on Sunday, July 30th. This appeal came amidst a sharp escalation of atrocities in the Spice Islands since the arrival of over three thousand Islamic militants from outside the province who have declared a Jihad or "Holy War" against the Christians.

My visit to Pakistan also was very productive as my delegation again met with non-governmental organizations that work on issues facing minority religious believers, women and children – it was deeply saddening to hear the stories of abuse and false charges leveled against those without power in that society. Further, we had the honor of dedicating a village hospital that, when constructed, will provide free medical services to 200,000 poor people in the surrounding areas. We also traveled to the border of Kashmir, the region under dispute between Pakistan and India, and met with refugees who fled their homes due to shelling and fear for their safety. Many of these refugees had severe medical problems and quite a few had lost limbs as a result of the conflict. In addition to the visits with groups whom we hope to assist with humanitarian aid, I also met with politicians from ousted parties, the Foreign Minister, the Minister for Minorities, and a number of generals working to make foundational changes in their system of government.

The Pakistani people suffer from a terrible economy – the GNP is smaller than that of the state of New Jersey. As in Indonesia, international investment,

particularly by small businesses, is welcome and desperately needed. I stressed to the leaders of both nations that the way to attract business investments is to have a stable government structure in which rule of law and human rights are respected.

Unfortunately, General Musharraf was pressured by the extremist Muslims not to amend the blasphemy law, a law which is tremendously abused and used against the religious minorities to falsely accuse and imprison them. Recently, the General announced that Sharia law, or Islamic law, would supersede the Constitution. Tragically, this will lead to more abuses of religious and ethnic minorities. However, the General has stated that he will eliminate the discriminatory separate electorates.

To express concern about the continued killings in the Spice Islands in Indonesia, please write to:

*His Excellency Abdurrahman Wahid
President of Indonesia
C/o Embassy of Indonesia
2020 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036*

To express concern about continued abuses against religious and ethnic minorities in Pakistan, please write to

*General Pervez Musharraf
C/o The Islamic Republic of Pakistan
2315 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008*



Dr. Richard Niemeyer of Leola, Lancaster County, treats a victim of religious violence in Indonesia. Dr. Niemeyer was the recipient of a Congressional Humanitarian Assistance Award at the Human Rights Conference I held June 17 at Paradise Mennonite Church. Dr. Niemeyer has established numerous medical clinics in poor lands and has helped organize shipments of food and medicine to such nations as Sudan and Mongolia. Mike Slotznick, of West Chester, received the Human Rights Award at the same time. Mr. Slotznick and I have worked together to combat religious persecution around the world. (Photo by Lucian Niemeyer)

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CHINA REPORT

PHILIP XU GUOXING, PASTOR PETER XU YONGZE RELEASED

According to an August 7 *Compass Direct* report, **Peter Xu Yongze**, China's most famous house church prisoner, has been released from a forced-labor camp after serving three years. The 58-year-old leader of the Protestant "Unity Movement" was imprisoned for "promoting a cult, preaching that the Apocalypse was near, and asking worshipers to wail in public spaces for several consecutive days." Group members deny these charges.

Despite the denials of the Chinese government, Xu Yongze reported that he had been mistreated and tortured while interrogated in prison.

Mr. Philip Xu Guoxing is a 43-year-old traveling evangelical preacher and Bible teacher from China. On June 16, 1997, Mr. Xu was arrested for a third time while preaching to a small group of people in a

private residence in Bao Shan District near Shanghai. Authorities, without a trial, sentenced Mr. Xu to three years of labor camp in Da Fung Laojiao Farm (labor camp) in northern Jiangsu Province. He was forced into hard labor during the day and solitary confinement at night. On October 22, 1997, his wife, after traveling 20 hours by bus to see him, was turned away. Towards the end of 1997, authorities allowed family members to visit him and in May of 1998, authorities allowed him to send one letter out of the prison.

I recently received an E-mail from his uncle stating the Mr. Xu was released from prison on July 17, 2000. Mr. Xu was a prisoner listed on the Religious Prisoners Congressional Task Force. Members of Congress and American citizens have advocated for his release. I rejoice with Mr. Xu and his family at his release.



Protestant house church leader Peter Xu Yongze has been released from prison after serving three years for "promoting a cult."

If you would like to advocate for religious prisoners around the world, please contact my office for a Prisoner Packet at (202)225-2411 or log on to my website at www.house.gov/pitts

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M.C.